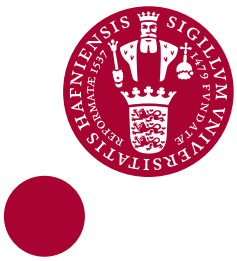

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Critical Theory Approaches to Media Effects

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Critical Theory Approaches to Media Effects in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*

Abstract

Mediatization research shares media effects studies' ambition of answering the difficult questions with regard to whether and how media matter and influence contemporary culture and society. The two approaches nevertheless differ fundamentally in that mediatization research seeks answers to these general questions by distinguishing between two concepts: mediation and mediatization. The media effects tradition generally considers the effects of the media to be a result of individuals being exposed to media content, i.e. effects are seen as an outcome of mediated communication. Mediatization research is concerned with long-term structural changes involving media, culture, and society, i.e. the influences of the media are understood in relation to how media are implicated in social and cultural changes and how these processes come to create new conditions for human communication and interaction. From the perspective of mediatization research, the most important effect of the media stems from their embeddedness in culture and society.

Keywords: high modernity, institution, media logics, mediatization, metaphor, structural change

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Mediatization

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Metaphors media scholars live by

In order to understand how mediatization theory may be useful for addressing the question of media effects, it is important, first, to understand how *effect* is a metaphor that media scholars use to study and explain the influences of media—a metaphor that simultaneously enables and constrains their understanding of the media–society relationship. In their highly influential book *Metaphors We Live By*, the philosophers and cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are not just stylistic features of our language but fundamental mechanisms of our mind, which allow us to use our physical and social experiences to make sense of other domains of life. By using metaphors, we come to think about another, typically more abstract, domain such as *love* in terms of a more concrete domain such as *physical activity*. The specific choice of metaphor makes a world of difference: Thinking of "love as a journey" entails a very different interpretation of human relationships from thinking of "love as a fight." Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) also demonstrate how basic, often physical and spatial, metaphors influence researchers' use of concepts and models when they engage in higher levels of abstract thinking. Such metaphors are not external decorations but are integral to the very scientific construction of the object of inquiry. The understanding of *causation* in various scientific disciplines is a case in point.

Human understanding of causation—that is, that events and changes are *effects* caused by something or somebody—is informed by a mental prototype, or gestalt, of *direct manipulation*, which is based on our human experience of co-occurring properties such as the turning of a switch and the immediate start of an engine or the dropping of a glass and its breaking on the floor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). These basic physical experiences of causation are metaphorically elaborated in various ways, allowing social scientists to develop models of social processes such as the *domino effect* in international politics. Metaphorical projections may lead researchers to envisage causation in various and often sophisticated ways, but the fundamentally physical notion of movement in space and exertion of force by one agent toward another often remains a core idea. Theoretical models of social processes are often illustrated by arrows between various entities (concepts or agents). The arrows are typically meant to display some sort of causation brought about by movement or action that forces itself upon another entity, thereby bringing about change. The fundamental idea in social sciences that an *independent variable* exerts influence on a *dependent variable* is similarly built upon an abstraction and metaphorical elaboration of the fundamental mental gestalt of direct manipulation: one entity causing a change of state in another entity by

movement in space or exercise of a physical force. The psychological stimulus–response model of behavioral change is likewise indebted to such basic physical experiences of causation.

Metaphorical elaboration of the physical manipulation of objects is also clearly at work in the field of media and communication studies, where many models of the media's effects are informed by spatial and physical metaphors such as the *hypodermic needle*, the *two-step flow of communication*, the *gatekeepermodel*, and the *agenda-setting model*. In these models, the effects of media are understood as outcomes of entities (media or texts) that force themselves upon human agents by being *injected* into the mind, by persuasive messages that approach recipients step by step, by media opening or closing the information gates, or by media moving salience from one agenda to another. Most media and communication models have gradually increased in complexity since their initial formulations, allowing various feedback loops and contextual conditions (where causal forces are themselves dependent on other forces) to modify the effects of the media. Such modifications do not, however, necessarily change the core metaphor that informs the conceptualization of media and the causal processes in which they are involved. Much of the research that is usually identified as concerned with the *effects* of media and communication is informed by a metaphor in which media and their texts are understood as a *force* that *hits* audiences and thereby causes individuals or society to think or act in particular ways. Often this force is measured in terms of *exposure* to particular media texts (advertising, violent media content, political messages, etc.), which is said to bring about a change in behavior, attitude, knowledge, or emotional state. In some models, the force of exposure may partly originate from the audience in the sense that the audience may seek *selective exposure* to particular messages, with the effect of reinforcing existing beliefs or obtaining particular gratifications.

The various effect models do not necessarily imply that effects are direct, linear, or predictable, although media effects research has often been criticized for just those kinds of implications (e.g., Gauntlett, 1998); ideas of direct and linear effects are actually very rare in contemporary research literature, and researchers working in the effect tradition often stress the conditional, cumulative, and variable character of these processes (e.g., Harris, 2009; Preiss et al., 2007). The critical problem is instead that the choice of underlying metaphor comes to structure the ways we think about the nature and possible influences of the media in the first place. In the case of media effects research, the underlying metaphor locates the question of media effects at the level of the media text: Texts are causal agents that produce effects through their exposure to audiences. Despite the questionable evidence of strong media effects after decades of research into the matter (McQuail, 2010), the notion of media effects continues to inform part of the international research community and still has a strong grip on the public imagination. This could also be attributed to the strength of this underlying metaphor, which likewise informs everyday thinking. In his balanced account of the development of media effects research, McQuail (2010) points to the apparent paradox that "this uncertainty [about the scientific evidence of media effects] is the more surprising since everyday experience provides countless, if minor, examples of influence. We dress for the weather

as forecast, buy something because of an advertisement" (p. 454).The idea of media effects also thrives because our commonsense notion of causation is informed by the intuitive metaphor of effects caused by direct exposure.

The choice of metaphor matters.The very notion of *effect* arises from the underlying gestalt of physical force, suggesting that causation in the social realm should be understood as effects produced by the force of an object or agent—not literally, of course, but metaphorically. Other metaphors would give rise to different models and theoretical frameworks of effects in which *effect* might not be the right word but in which terms such as *influence*, *dependency*, *logics*, or *costructuring* might appear more appropriate to describe why and how media matters. The argument here is not that the dominant metaphor behind media effects studies is entirely wrong or that we should try to develop concepts and theories that are free of metaphors and only involve literal meanings. Metaphors are important and indispensable tools of imagination and reasoning even within the scientific domains, and spatial metaphors in particular are important tools with which to think. Precisely because of this, it is important to consider the epistemic consequences of metaphorical choices and to evaluate the heuristic possibilities and limitations of a given metaphorical construction. The metaphorical idea underlying many effects studies may in some cases be appropriate and useful, for instance if we wish to analyze some basic cognitive functions of processing mediated information under experimental conditions. In many other instances, however, this metaphorical construct may obscure the ways in which media actually come to make a difference in modern societies. In other words, by employing other metaphors, we may reframe the notion of *media effects* and produce other theoretical frameworks that could be better suited for understanding the importance of media in contemporary society, including how the various media may exert influence at the level of individual agency and among other social domains and society as a whole.

Mediatization studies is not influenced by any one particular metaphorical construction but relies on several metaphors to construct its object of enquiry. This is in part due to the fact that mediatization studies encompasses several theoretical perspectives, including institutional, cultural, and material approaches to understanding the interdependency between media, culture, and society (Lundby, 2014). Hjarvard's (2008, 2013) work on mediatization has found inspiration in Meyrowitz's (1993) distinction between three metaphors of media—media as *conduits*, media as *languages*, and media as *environments*—each of which entails a particular set of questions regarding what media are and do. Meyrowitz uses this typology to distinguish between various strands of media research and argues that the various intellectual demarcations and controversies in the field may to some extent be explained by the various choices of media metaphors. This entry will return to this typology to illustrate its usefulness for understanding the mediatized conditions of communication in contemporary society, but the three metaphors are not exhaustive since they primarily focus on how we should understand various aspects of media rather than the social and cultural processes in which media are involved.

The distinction between mediation and mediatization

The theoretical framework of mediatization distinguishes itself from effects studies as well as several other strands of media research by making a crucial distinction between *mediation* and *mediatization*. By *mediation*, we understand the use of media for communication and interaction—for example, a politician may mediate his or her message through a press release or by posting comments to followers on Facebook. By *mediatization*, we understand the long-term social and cultural changes related to the increased presence of media—for example, changes in political institutions and the process of political opinion formation influenced by the rise of independent news media as well as the growing use of interactive media in political affairs. The study ofmediation concerns the various ways in which different media may influence the textual content and interaction between senders and receivers within particular contexts. The various instances of mediation do not, however, change the overall social relationships and patterns of interaction within and between institutions in society.The study of mediatization concerns these transformative processes at the *collective* level and the ways in which these changes come to *condition* interaction and human agency in contemporary societies.

The majority of media and communication studies have for obvious reasons concerned the study of mediated communication processes—that is, the relationship between senders, media texts, and receivers as well as the context of this communicative circuit. As outlined, effects studies have primarily considered media as the independent variable exerting influence on the dependent variable, the audience. Other strands of research have typically taken the receivers to be the independent variable and considered what active audiences do with the media. This is clearly the case for uses and gratifications research (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which is often said to have reversed the effect tradition's paradigm of "what media do to people" to "what people do with media." The tradition of reception studies is also primarily concerned with the audience's perspective on the media, including, however, not just the audience's use but also its active decoding of messages (Morley, 1986). From the perspective of mediatization studies, it is important to transcend the dichotomy of prioritizing either the media text or the active audience and to instead stress the embeddedness of media in social and cultural arrangements; media are neither external factors that exercise an effect on individuals and groups from the outside nor optional artifacts that audiences may choose or not choose to use, interpret, or repurpose as they please. Mediatization research thus stresses the need to move beyond the idea of independent and dependent variables when we consider the *effects* of the media. In the words of Schulz (2004): "As the concept emphasizes interaction and transaction processes in a dynamic perspective, mediatization goes beyond a simple causal logic dividing the world into dependent and independent variables. Thus, mediatization as a concept both transcends and includes media effects" (p. 90). Both mass media and various forms of interpersonal and social network media have become integrated into the fabric of culture and social life to such an extent that we must regard this very embeddedness as an important cultural and social *effect* in its own right.

As an extension of this, mediatization studies moves beyond the study of mediated communication per se and addresses the structural transformations at the intersection of media, culture, and society. These changes are not simply considered at the overall societal level but predominantly within *particular social institutions, domains, or fields*. Mediatization research thus addresses the mediatization of politics (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014), mediatization of sports (Frandsen, 2014), mediatization of children's play (Hjarvard, 2004), and so on. The idea is not that mediatization produces similar outcomes in every sphere of society but rather that the interaction between media and other social and cultural factors must be analyzed in its specificity. As such, mediatization denotes a general, macro process in society on a par with globalization and urbanization, yet, in order to study the processes and outcomes of mediatization (i.e., the specificities of developments within particular domains), we should generalize and build explanatory conceptual frameworks at the meso level. Mediatization theory is a *macrolevel theory* in the sense that it provides a general framework for understanding "long-term interrelation processes between media change on the one hand and social and cultural change on the other" (Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2010, p. 223), but the actual analysis and associated conceptual work occur at a domain-specific level, taking into account the specific historical and sociocultural circumstances. Theorizations concerning, for instance, mediatized politics or mediatized religion may accordingly be considered *middle-range theories* (Boudon, 1991; Merton, 1957).

Although the study of mediatization involves a shift of attention from specific mediated encounters to a structural level of social and cultural change, the analysis ofmediatization is also concerned with the role of agency and social interaction. From the point of view of *structuration theory* (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005), structure and agency are interdependent and constitutive of one another, so that the very process of bringing about structural change involves the agency of individuals and organizations. Mediatization is an outcome of human activity, albeit not necessarily an intended outcome. Sports such as football have gradually become mediatized due to the changing practices and innovations of media companies, clubs, international sports organizations (such as FIFA and the International Olympic Committee), advertisers, fans, and audiences. In particular, television has been instrumental in the development of football to a dominant global spectator sport at the same time as football clubs and advertisers have actively sought to exploit the economic potential this massive TV exposure has made possible.The synergy and mutual interdependency between media and sports organizations have paved the way for an increased professionalization and commercialization of football, which then comes to redefine both media and sports practices. In order to attract bigger audiences (also to justify the ever growing expenses of football TV rights), TV sports producers have developed new types of football coverage (i.e., new program formats, types of commentary, playback techniques, themed channels, ways of involving audiences through interactive media, etc.). Football clubs have grown into enormously lucrative businesses that not only seek to maximize TV exposure of the game but have also become heavily involved in advertisement and fan management (Frandsen, 2014).The

growing interaction between professionals in the television and football industries has not been without problems and conflicts; for instance, in the early years of TV transmissions, football clubs feared spectators would stay home from football stadiums, and since the 1990s broadcasters have increasingly complained about the exorbitant costs of football rights. Nevertheless, TV exposure—and increasingly also other forms of media practices—have become central to the social activity of *doing football*, not only among the football clubs and professional players themselves but also among audiences and amateur players for whom the experience of football has become saturated with meanings and practices from the professionalized and mediatized sports (Johansen, 2016).

Not only are structure and agency interdependent and constitutive of one another but also the integration and importance of media in a growing number of social domains transform conditions for the exercise of agency and interaction. Media, mass media, interpersonal media, and social network media may be understood metaphorically as *social tools* by and through which agency and interaction are performed.The conditions for practicing, for instance, politics or teaching have been altered due to—among other factors—the presence of various forms of media in the political and educational institutions. Because of this, as social tools, media may variously *enable, limit, and structure* the ways in which agency and interaction are performed. For instance, in the case of education, digital media allow for new ways of learning but may also strengthen schools' ability to control and test students.

Mediatization research shares media effects studies' ambition of answering the difficult questions with regard to whether and how media matter and influence contemporary culture and society. Mediatization research's answering of such general questions involves a fundamental reframing of our object of inquiry to look beyond or above the level of mediation.The next section will explicate this by first addressing the diachronic, historical dimension of mediatization and then considering how we should understand the influence of media on cultural and social change.The following section comes back to the synchronic dimension and discusses how we can use the notion of institutional logics to conceptualize the media as providers of new conditions for human agency and interaction.

Historical transformations

Inherent in the notion of mediatization are processes of historical change. Similarly to other major processes of modernity such as industrialization, urbanization, and individualization, mediatization suggests both quantitative and qualitative changes in the social structure and texture of cultural life. At this very broad level, mediatization may be defined as the process whereby culture and society increasingly become dependent on the media and their logics (Hjarvard, 2013). The idea is not that the media are "colonizing" every other domain of society and stripping them of their inner rationale but rather that there is a growing interdependency in which the media, in conjunction with other important factors, have become co-constitutive of social and cultural structures and agency. For instance, *mediatized politics* is not necessarily less political, and

politicians' dependency on the media does not imply that politicians have become less preoccupied with the "authoritative allocation of values," to use Easton's (1965) idea of the core of politics. Depoliticization can be a by-product of mediatization, for instance if citizens become disillusioned by political spin and personalized politics, but whether or not it occurs is an empirical question and depends on other factors as well. Mediatization can also foster repoliticization, as demonstrated by the Occupy movement's using various social network media to engage political activists in more individualized ways (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Mediatized politics does mean, however, that the very practice of *doing politics* has become dependent on various media practices such as dealing with journalists, making campaign strategies, and using social network media on a routine basis to communicate with followers. Due to this integration into political organizations and practices, media are no longer simple communication channels but rather integral to the ways in which politicians and citizens engage with politics. Media cannot be taken out of the political equation; they have become part of the air politicians and citizens breathe, to paraphrase Richard Hoggart (1976).

The mediatization processes are characterized by a *duality*, which at first glance may appear paradoxical: The media have emerged as a separate cultural domain and social institution at the same time as they are becoming increasingly integrated into other social institutions and cultural practices.These developments of simultaneous growing independency and integration into other domains are not, however, necessarily contradictory but may be mutually reinforcing: The growing authority of various media in society at large (e.g., news media, broadcasting, the Internet, and social networkmedia) stimulates the integration of media practices in domains that until recently have paid little attention to media.

Historically, the two processes overlap but do not appear simultaneously. The growing centrality of mass media as a partly independent institution in society may be labeled as a first wave of mediatization (the second half of the twentieth century), while the integration of various digital media into the lifeworld of other institutions may be considered a second wave of mediatization (from the end of the twentieth century onward). In many parts of the Western world, the media have acquired a growing autonomy since the mid-twentieth century and have become distinct cultural industries and social institutions. In particular, the news media have emerged as a semi-independent institution (Cook, 1998) that plays an important role in the functioning of the public sphere with regard to both political and cultural matters. Until the mid-twentieth century, news media were often partisan and to various degrees controlled by political parties and therefore labeled the *party press* in many countries.With the growing influence and authority of journalism in news media, the ties to the political parties were loosened. As a consequence, the political institution as well as other institutions that are dependent on public legitimacy and attention (the church, sports, etc.) have become dependent on the media in various ways.

Complementarily to this development, various forms of media—mass media, interpersonal media, and social network media—have been integrated into the workings of various institutions to such an extent that their functioning cannot be understood without taking the role of various media into account. For instance, the family and its principal location, the home, have become a major locus of media consumption and usage. In this way, media become tools for *doing family*. Cellphones and social network media are resources for staying in contact, and film and television provide shared experiences for the family. At the same time, media come to costructure the ways in which family members are together as well as separate in the home. The gradual rise of media-rich households and in particular media-rich bedrooms for children (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001) has created a household environment in which the media influence the ways in which family members are together, alone, or actively connected to people outside (friends, colleagues, etc.) while being physical present in the home. Media become part of the family's moral economy, for instance when they share evenings together watching favorite films or TV shows or in the form of parents' punishment of children by restricting their use of computer games or cellphones.

Following this dual process, the media have gained a presence *out-there* in the public and wider society at the same time as they are *in-here*, integrated into the structure and workings of everyday life in the narrower social settings of family, workplace, classroom, and so on.The dual process of media being simultaneously embedded out-there in wider society and in-here in the lifeworld of individuals represents a new, mediatized condition of culture and society.The outcomes (or *effects*) of these processes may be manifold, diverse, and contradictory and are dependent on the domain in question. Thus, at the general level, mediatization does not so much concern particular outcomes as it does change structural conditions and underlying dynamics of social interaction.Within particular social domains, we may, however, be able to specify what the influences or consequences of these changing conditions and dynamics may be, such as increased personalization in politics (Campus, 2010) or a challenge to traditional authority in the realm of religion (Hjarvard, 2012b). As regards the latter, studies in the Nordic countries demonstrate how news media and popular media culture have become prominent sources of information about religion and have challenged the Protestant Church's ability to project its own religious worldview in the public realm. At the same time ministers of religion have to accommodate new media's demand of responsiveness when communicating with their followers on the Web and through social network media (Hjarvard & Lövheim, 2012). We may also be able to discern various degrees of mediatization; for instance, the institutional domain of science seems to be less open to influences from the media (Rödder & Schäfer, 2010).

There are various interpretations regarding mediatization as a historical process, in particular with regard to the temporal scope of developments. Generally, one finds a distinction between a civilizational perspective on mediatization, in which mediatization has been an ongoing process since the very first developments of communication media (cave drawings, writing on papyrus, etc.), and a modern perspective, which situates mediatization as a process of high modernity.

Krotz (2007) is a proponent of the civilizational perspective on mediatization, by which he means "the historical developments that took and take place as a change of (communication) media and its consequences …, not only with the rise of new forms of media but also with changes in the meaning of media in general" (p. 258). Krotz stresses the need to understand mediatization in a historical context and therefore does not seek to develop a more precise definition since the process itself varies historically. The modern perspective considers mediatization to be a particular process of high modernity in which media come to play a prominent role in culture and society as a whole. According to this perspective, the influence of the media has become more comprehensive both quantitatively and qualitatively relative to that in earlier times, and the processes of mediatization are intertwined with other processes of modernity, including globalization, individualization, and so on. The general process of differentiation in modernity is both accentuated and moderated through the process of mediatization. In modern societies, the media has gradually become differentiated from other institutional domains (e.g., the news media has become partly independent of political parties) at the same time as various media have come to serve as arenas for exchanging information and experiences between separate domains.

The civilizational perspective on mediatization clearly has a valid argument when it highlights that various media played an important role in many early human civilizations. The invention of writing, the development of painting, the building of libraries, and the spread of the printing press all had significant consequences at various points in time. The question is nevertheless whether it is meaningful to consider all of these media developments and influences as instances of mediatization. The modern perspective on mediatization takes a more modest interpretation of the concept by reserving *mediatization* for a particular historical phase or condition (i.e., high modernity) at the same time as it acknowledges that not all occurrences of media influence are instances of mediatization. The issue of *dependence* and *independence* is important for this argument. In so-called premodern societies, various media of communication would usually be governed by particular social classes or institutions, such as the priesthood, the state, or the military, and use of media would in general be subsumed into the modus operandi of these institutions and lack sufficient momentum and internal structure in itself—compared to today. For instance, the medium of writing and reading became very important for the global expansion and success of the Catholic Church (Horsfield, 2013), and the invention of print became important for the Christian Protestant movement (Eisenstein, 1983), but, in these religious contexts, writing and printing were very much subsumed into the interests and logics of the priesthood and the church.

The various communication media remained by and large undifferentiated from other institutional contexts, and it was not until the twentieth century that the idea of communication media as a particular domain of related technologies, practices, and gradually also institutions began to emerge. Until then, media were not recognized as *media* but as discrete technologies and types of craftsmanship, each with its own particularities and organizational affiliations. The late historical differentiation of media from other domains may also provide a partial explanation for why media

were not on the agenda of the early sociological theorists of modernity. When Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emilie Durkheim in the nineteenth century wrote about the emerging modern society, processes such as industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and individualization were prominent dynamics, but media played a less noticeable role. This changed over the course of the twentieth century, with the media evolving into a separate, semi-independent realm at the same time as they gained prominence in many other domains within culture and society. These processes place *mediatization* on the sociological agenda.

The characteristics of the media

Mediatization theory displays some similarities with *medium theory* (or *media ecology* as it is also called), for instance contributions from Innis (1951), McLuhan (1964), and Meyrowitz (1986). Both theoretical frameworks concern the long-term influence of media in culture and society and both place emphasis on the ways in which characteristics of media come to structure human relationships and communicative interaction. Mediatization theory and medium theory provide alternative understandings of the prevalent ways in which media effects or influences are usually understood: Neither mediatization theory nor medium theory locate the influence of the media at the level of *mediation* (individual communicative encounters) but instead locate it at a more general level at which the presence of media with particular characteristics come to costructure social and cultural affairs.

There are, however, also considerable differences between these two strands of theory, not least with regard to the preferred *level of analysis* and the conceptualization of the *characteristics of the media*. In the tradition of Innis (1951) and McLuhan (1964), medium theory is a grand theory that suggests major epochal changes over the course of human history due to the invention of particular communication media (e.g., the transition from an oral culture to a written culture, from a print culture to an audiovisual culture). In contrast, mediatization theory is generally skeptical of such grand theorizing and stresses the necessity of grounding theoretical claims of media influence in empirical analysis within particular historical and social contexts. Mediatization may be understood as a process that takes place at a general, macro level (i.e., in several social domains of modern society), but the actual processes of mediatization may take very different forms in different societal domains due to influence from existing social and cultural contexts. Thus, as stated, mediatization research seeks to develop middle-range theories about the ways in which media become co-constitutive of social and cultural change within particular domains of society and how the media themselves become subject to change during these processes.

The differences between the two strands of theory are also reflected in the conception of media and their properties. Among the founding fathers of medium theory, we find an essentialist notion of the media's characteristics. From Innis (1951), we get the idea that media has a fundamental bias toward either time or space, and, from McLuhan (1964), we learn about the difference between hot and cool media. In both cases, the idea is that these inherent properties influence not only human

communication but also wider society. For instance, Innis argues that the medium of writing on paper has a fundamental bias toward space instead of time (it is easy to transport but deteriorates quickly), and cultures based on this medium will tend to build large empires. These notions are suggestive and may work as a source of inspiration, but they are of little help if we wish to establish more coherent theoretical frameworks for analyzing how media make a difference within particular social domains. The notions of bias and of hot and cool media operate at such a general level that they cannot connect with the existing conceptual vocabulary of social science and communication research, and they tend to overemphasize these essential and distinguishing features at the expense of other characteristics such as economic structures or generic conventions that may be similar across various media. For instance, TV news is different from that in the printed newspaper, but, in spite of one being a cool medium and the other a hot medium, they may be very similar in other ways, for instance in terms of journalistic professionalism and commercial basis and ownership. Medium theory simply fails to take such features of the media into account. Later contributions from the medium theory tradition have sought to move beyond the essentialist notions of media characteristics and to incorporate existing concepts of social theory to provide more elaborate and empirically based accounts of media influences. Meyrowitz's (1986) attempt to combine medium theory's grand perspective with Goffman's (1959/1990) micro sociology of situated interaction provides an account that is much closer to the middle-range theorizing of mediatization theory. In Meyrowitz's analysis, we are given a historically contextualized analysis of television's influence on cultural authority in the United States after World War II with regard to the relationships between men and women, adults and children, and politicians and voters. Although his account is still very wide in scope, it nevertheless suggests that some strands of medium theory may develop in the direction of mediatization research.

There is no consensus within mediatization research on how to conceptualize the characteristics of the media and how they may work to influence social and cultural affairs. Many researchers (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Hjarvard, 2013; Klinger & Svensson, 2014) nevertheless agree that the notion of *logics* could be useful for specifying the characteristics of the media. The concept of logics is a metaphor and shorthand for the various modi operandi that characterize the workings of the media. As with any other institutional domain, media encompass rules (formal and informal) and resources (material and symbolic; Giddens, 1984), and the notion of logics seeks to capture how these rules and resources translate into operational features in everyday practices of the media. Logics are, therefore, not an exhaustive description of all possible characteristics of the media but only concern the *workings* of the media. Examples of such logics are the news criteria of journalistic news media, dramaturgical conventions informing the production of TV narratives, the business models of social network media such as Facebook, and established conventions among audiences and users for the usage of particular media. Evidently, there is no one singular media logic at work but rather a mix of overlapping logics that may to varying degrees work in tandem or in conflict with one another. In general, we may distinguish between

technological, aesthetic, and institutional logics, and each type of logic influences how a particular medium functions within a particular context. When we talk about the logics of the media, we are thus using the notion of *logic* as a shorthand for the entire configuration of technological, aesthetic, and institutional dynamics at work within a given media entity.

Institutional interdependency and struggles

From a sociological perspective, it is important to stress that no social domain or institution exists in a vacuum but is rather dependent upon and interacts with other domains and institutions. Within institutional theory (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), society is considered an *interinstitutional system* in which various institutional domains such as family, politics, and religion have a certain autonomy but also interact and overlap in several ways. This implies that institutions not only operate in accordance with their own inner logics but also that the way they work always to some extent takes their surroundings into account. This is especially true for the media and their logics, with broadcasting providing an illustrative case. As Scannell's (1996) historical studies of radio and television have demonstrated, broadcasting as a communicative and social practice had to be learned, and means of making sense of the media of broadcasting were progressively established through interaction between programmers, audiences, policymakers, and so on. From an institutional point of view, these historical learning processes may be understood as institution building, through which broadcasting gradually established itself as a semi-independent institution in society at the same time as it came to take into account—in its own modus operandi—the interests of other institutional domains. In their programming, broadcasting institutions had to consider not only the demands of radio and TV technology and the aesthetics of various audiovisual genres but also the family (e.g., broadcasting particular programs relative to a suitable timetable of family life), the commercial market (e.g., regulating how consumer products are displayed or not displayed in programs), politics (e.g., observing impartiality in news and current affairs), religion (e.g., regulating which religions are allowed airtime to preach), and so on.The logics of the media are thus a configuration of both *inner* demands arising from the media as communicative media and *outer* demands arising from various domains with which the media interact.

Following this perspective, the media's logics are not stable entities or fixed operational guidelines. They are a *historically variable configuration* of various social rules of a technological, aesthetic, and institutional nature. They are products of the creative work done by professionals working within the media (engineers, artists, journalists, administrators, etc.) and these professionals' attempts to adhere to these rules independently of the outside world; they are, however, also subject to negotiation with outside stakeholders (politicians, regulatory bodies, commercial markets, consumers, etc.).The logics of the media may thus be contested and negotiated, with such social struggles often seeking to determine which institutional rules should be applied to the media's practice. Within institutional theory, the interaction between and overlap of institutional domains

are seen as sources of tension as well as change: "Some of the most important struggles between groups, organizations, and classes are over the appropriate relationships between institutions, and by which institutional logic different activities should be regulated and to which categories of persons they apply" (Friedland&Alford, 1991, p. 256). If we translate this to our broadcasting example, the institutional struggles concern whether broadcasting as a practice should primarily be influenced by the commercial market, the moral values of the family, the religious values of the national church, the political orientations of the dominant parties, or the professional values of media workers such as journalists, technicians, and producers. Similarly, we find institutional struggles over the practices of social network media: Users of, for instance, Facebook may want to employ it for a variety of public, private, and personal purposes at the same time as companies and media professionals that develop social networks have to take into account a series of interests of commercial, public regulatory, and moral natures in a global context. Although struggles between institutional domains are in principle permanent, we often find periods in which a particular configuration of interests has found stability and a set of operational logics have established themselves as a dominant *regime*.This is the sociological equivalent to what historians label *phases* or *periods*. In light of this, we may understand mediatization within a particular institutional domain as a nonlinear process of qualitative shifts from one institutional configuration or regime to another (Hjarvard, 2014).

The notion of logics is useful because it allow us to understand *how* different institutional fields may influence one another. From this perspective, mediatization is the social process through which other social domains are influenced by the logics of the media. This is typically because social actors within the domains in question increasingly find the media *relevant* to their own purposes, and, in order to take advantage of the media as a resource, they begin using media and thereby adapting to the logics of the media. In the same process, the media may also adapt to the demands of the particular domain in question. The institutional overlap between media on the one hand and, for instance, politics on the other hand may lead to developments in several directions. It may generally lead to a mediatization of politics, but the reverse development, a politicization of media (i.e.,media influenced by the logics of the political institution) is also possible.These processes are not mutually exclusive, and both trends may become visible simultaneously: Some dimensions of politics become mediatized at the same time as some dimensions of the media are politicized. See *figure 1* for an illustration of these processes.

Such growing institutional overlaps are often promoted by so-called *institutional entrepreneurs*, who "creatively manipulate social relationships by importing and exporting cultural symbols and practices from one institutional order to another" (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 115). The

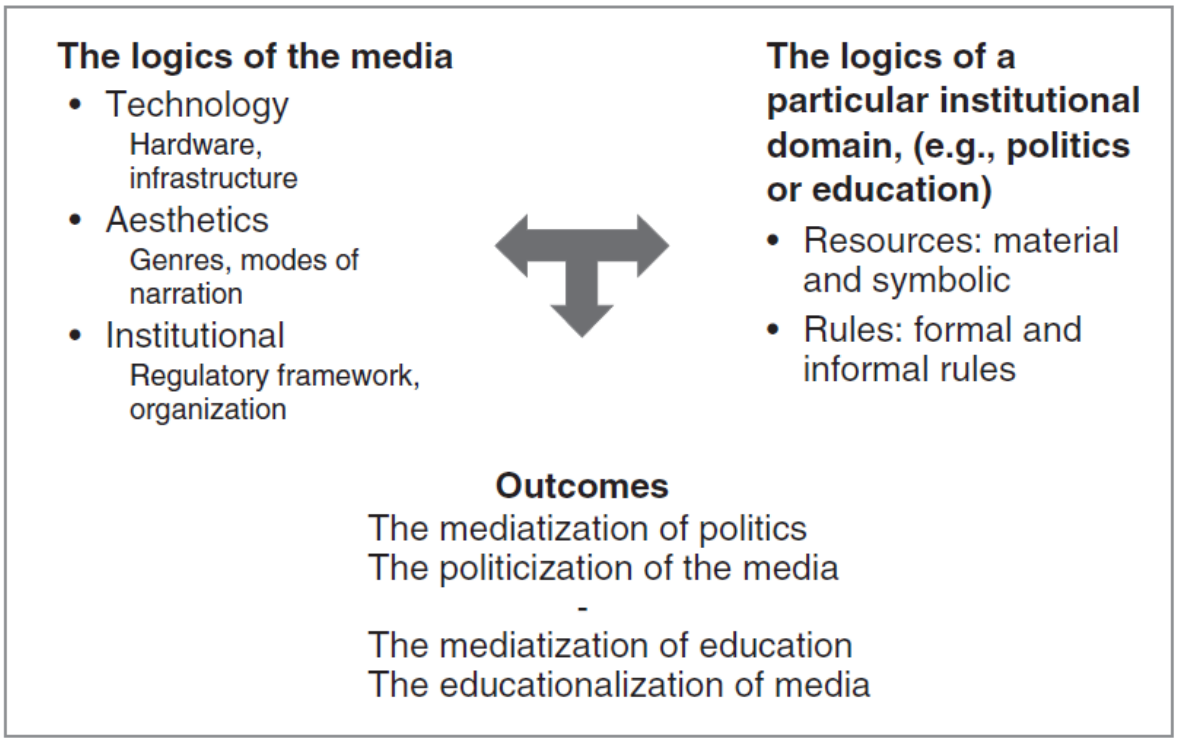

Figure 1 Institutional overlap: the mutual adaptations to logics from various institutional domains, exemplified by the institutions of politics and education.

mediatization of politics may provide us with an illustrative example of these dynamics. When political parties begin hiring media expertise (public relations consultants, communication advisors, spin doctors, etc.), they not only acquire know-how that enables them to communicate more effectively with their potential voters; they also acquire people with other experiences and work practices than those present inside the political organizations. Such media advisors often have backgrounds in the media (e.g., as journalists, political commentators, and PR officers), and they bring with them a different set of institutional logics (i.e., media logics) that may be gradually and partially implemented by the political parties. Similarly, when political spin doctors move back to the media or to communications jobs in private businesses, they may take with them knowledge about the logics of political institutions. Such knowledge could prove valuable for the media or industry in question but could also risk the former spin doctor continuing to adhere to the logics of his or her former employer.

It is nonetheless important to stress that the logics of the media are not necessarily the *cause* of change but rather the *means* through which processes of mediatization occur. The media are increasingly used because they gradually appear *relevant*—and progressively necessary and unavoidable—from the perspectives of other social domains such as the family, the educational system, and political life. Yet this status of being relevant, necessary, unavoidable, and so on is not a product of the media logics per se but may be brought about by the spread of media in society in general as well as other social and cultural developments. If we consider the case of the

mediatization of politics, we see that the erosion of class-based party politics and the decline in political party membership, which are observable in many Western countries, are products of several different factors, not merely the rise of media. Changes in the industrial structure and social composition of the workforce, the rise of living standards, increased individualism and leisure time, and so on over the course of the twentieth century have made existing political organizational frameworks less adequate, and in this process the media appear increasingly relevant for politicians trying to reach voters in new ways as existing communication structures become weaker. This increased relevance has made politicians and political parties open to a gradual adaptation to the logics of the media. In this process, politics become mediatized, not only as a result of the media but also because other social and cultural transformations make such a development appear necessary and unavoidable. In this light, mediatization is also an *outcome*—an *answer*—to structural transformations in modern society as a whole, including a growing need for and possibility of flexible time–space coordination across all domains of culture and society—in the family, the school, politics, the workplace, and so on.

Finally, it must be emphasized that mediatization may not necessarily be the only or most important process of change. Mediatization is often intertwined with other social processes such as globalization or commercialization. In the case of globalization, the process of mediatization is both a precondition and an outcome. Globalization is heavily dependent on the emergence of a global communication infrastructure to support industrial and cultural exchanges and interdependencies. At the same time, the various social forces at work in globalization (e.g., global market competition and migration) open up existing national and local media systems and make them more dependent on global media systems and flows. Processes of mediatization may thus work to lever other social processes at the same time as mediatization is furthered by globalization (e.g., the emergence of global media industries such as Amazon, Apple, and Google) and commercialization (e.g., deregulation policies removing political and cultural obligations from media).

Three metaphors: Changing conditions of mediations

Mediatization not only involves historical changes at a structural level between various domains or institutions of culture and society; it also creates new *conditions* for communication and social interaction—that is, for practices of mediation. As such, mediatization entails a *synchronic* dimension as well as the diachronic, historical dimension discussed so far. This section suggests how we may analytically differentiate between various dynamics of the media in view of the mediatized circumstances brought about by historical developments. In order to specify how mediatization may provide new conditions for communicative practices, the discussion will—again—resort to the metaphorical domain for assistance. As mentioned, Meyrowitz (1993) has suggested three metaphors for media, and these have informed media and communication studies: We may distinguish between media as conduits, media as languages, and media as environments (see Hjarvard, Mortensen, & Eskjær, 2015). The metaphor of media as conduits leads us to think of

communication as transportation: Media move content across time and space between senders and receivers, and researchers are usually interested in the questions suggested by Lasswell's classic communication model: Who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect? (Lasswell, 1948). As conduits for transporting messages from one point to another, important influences of the media involve volume, speed, reach, and level of involvement. More broadly speaking, this concerns the media dynamic of *amplification*: the process of making messages known to a wider audience.

The metaphor of media as a language focuses our attention on the symbolic work of the media: the fact that they not only transport but also construct representations of the world through discourses in text, pictures, and sound.This metaphor makes us aware of media's aesthetic and ideological work, the ways in which they *frame issues*, *stage performances*, and provide unfolding events with a particular *dramaturgy*. The metaphor of media as environments moves our attention away from the individual communicators (sender and receiver) and content (texts) and toward the *structural relationships*, including structures of *power*, within which media are *embedded* and of which media are *partly constitutive*. Media are, as argued, subject to pressure and influence from other institutions, but they are also partly constitutive of communicative and social relationships. The collective and ritual functions of the press and broadcasting media have been considered in various studies (Carey, 1989; Dayan & Katz, 1992), as have the social relationships and interactions costructured by mobile and social network media (Ling, 2008; Rainie &Wellman, 2014; Van Dijk, 2012).

Media metaphor	*Dynamics*	*Influence*
Conduits	Amplification	Volume, speed, reach, and level of involvement
Language	Framing and performative agency	Representation, performance, and dramaturgy
Environment	Costructuring	Media practices both embedded in and constitutive of structural relations of power

Table 1 Mediatized conditions: three influential media dynamics. Source: Republished with permission from Peter Lang. Hjarvard, Mortensen, and Eskjær, 2015, p. 10.

In light of these metaphors, we can distinguish between various media dynamics that influence communication and interaction (see *table 1*). These media dynamics (amplification, framing and performative agency, and costructuring) are of a general nature and are not only present in mediatized cultures and societies, yet the mediatized conditions of contemporary culture and society make them more prevalent and integral to communicative practices in many domains. Further, in order to analyze these dynamics empirically, we also need to take into account the

particular context, including the particular media logics at work. For instance, the dynamic of framing is spelled out differently in media systems dominated by public service media compared to fully commercialized media systems. The various media dynamics may not least become active and visible during times of conflict in which resources for communication and interaction are mobilized by social actors seeking to change the balance of power. Under such conflictual circumstances, media dynamics may come to costructure the unfolding of events in unprecedented ways, with the result that control over and access to media resources have become important for stakeholders (see Cottle, 2006).

Epilogue: Interdisciplinary research

The field of mediatization research has not developed as a direct response to or critique of the effect paradigm in media and communication research. The development of mediatization theory and analyses is first and foremost a response to—and an attempt to make sense of—the intensified presence of a variety of media in modern society and their growing and diverse influence in several domains of culture and society. As Krotz (2014) has formulated, "the rise of the concept 'mediatization' at the end of the last century was an academic answer, especially of communication and media scholars, to the growing importance of digital and computer directed media, which was accompanied by a change in old media" (p. 132). In order to address these developments, mediatization research has rearticulated some of the questions that had been formulated by media scholars in the mid-twentieth century, when the discipline was in its making, including by researchers within the effects studies paradigm. However, the questions are reconsidered in light of the mediatized conditions of contemporary society and involve a reframing of the object of enquiry. As a result, mediatization research is an attempt to move beyond not only the powerful media or effect paradigm (what media do to audiences) but also the empowered, active media user paradigm (what audiences do with media). Media are not external to culture and society—exercising influence *on* society—or artifacts that people may voluntarily use or not use as they see fit. Media have become integrated into the fabric of culture and society and thereby condition and influence social practices, at the same time as media are influenced by the particularities of the contexts within which they are embedded.

The discipline of media and communication studies has experienced enormous growth since its inception and may be considered a success story in terms of academic institution building. At the same time, and partly as a result of the discipline's growth, the agenda of media and communication studies has become more specialized and diverse. Former International Communication Association president Wolfgang Donsbach noted in his 2005 presidential address that "research questions become smaller and more remote all the time" (Donsbach, 2006, p. 447), and a former head of the Nordic media research association Nordicom, Ulla Carlsson, has observed that the research area of "media and communication is variegated in the extreme, and few syntheses embrace the field as a whole. … Specialization, which is not always solidly founded

in theory or methodology, may cause the field to disintegrate into small groups, each a discursive community unto itself" (Carlsson, 2005, p. 545). In view of such disciplinary fragmentation, the research field of mediatization studies may be considered an attempt to synthesize developments across a range of media and institutional fields at the same time as it tries to remain sensitive to the contexts of the individual institutional domains within which media may make a difference (Hjarvard, 2012a). While the tradition of effect research often seeks to identify particular instances of media effects, isolated from the messy contexts of other cultural and social domains, mediatization research locates the *effect* of media in the very intermeshing of media and other spheres of society. As such, mediatization is also a call for interdisciplinary research in which media scholars must engage with the agendas of other disciplines such as political science, sociology of religion, and education studies. In order to address whether and how media exert influence in various domains of culture and society, we require both a synthesizing theoretical framework and an open mind toward other disciplines' theories and empirical results.

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